

First records of Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* for Benin

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Premières mentions du Tournepierrre à collier *Arenaria interpres* pour le Bénin. Le 1 février 2010, un Tournepierrre à collier *Arenaria interpres* a été observé sur la lagune de Cotonou, Bénin. Le 5 février, deux ou trois oiseaux étaient présents au même endroit. Il s'agit des premières données pour le pays de ce migrateur paléarctique, qui est commun ou peu commun le long de la côte ouest-africaine et a déjà été enregistré dans les pays voisins, le Togo et le Nigeria.

On 1 February 2010, between 17.00 and 19.00 hrs, I was observing the birds near the mouth of the Cotonou lagoon, Benin, from the terrace of the Hôtel du Lac. My attention was drawn to a small, stocky wader amongst the nearest rocks a few hundred metres away. Despite the rather bad light, coming from the west as I was viewing south-west with 10× binoculars, the bird's dark brown upperparts combined with the white underparts, brown throat and upper breast, and rather short bill indicated that I was watching a Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* in either non-breeding (winter) or juvenile plumage (BirdGuides & Oxford University Press 2003–06), a species with which I am familiar in the UK. On the evening of 5 February, two or three Ruddy Turnstones, showing the same features as the bird on 1 February, were present at the same location. All were either resting or possibly foraging on the rocks; I did not see them in flight. Their size, shape and distinctive plumage was confirmed by direct comparison with nearby Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos*. There are no serious contenders as confusion species: *Charadrius* plovers are smaller and even shorter billed and most *Calidris* sandpipers are also smaller and have a different jizz, while the larger species have longer bills.

Although Ruddy Turnstone has not yet been reported from Benin (Dowsett 1993, Dowsett *et al.* submitted), its occurrence is no surprise. It has been recorded in neighbouring Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994) and Togo (Cheke & Walsh 1996), and the species is a common to uncommon Palearctic passage migrant and winter visitor to West African coasts (Urban *et al.* 1986, van Gils & Wiersma 1996, Borrow & Demey 2001, Delany *et al.* 2009).

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